

CAPITAL LETTER:

CIA's 'No-Comment' Man

CPYRGHT

By RUTH MONTGOMERY

WASHINGTON. The official "no comment" man for the hush-hush Central Intelligence Agency reluctantly retired last week.

Col. Stanley Grogan, 72, was the nearest thing to a public voice that CIA director John McCone and his predecessor, Allen Dulles, could boast.

Until his recent heart attack, Grogan carried the title of assistant to the director. Actually, he was the lone official contact between the subterranean agency and the clamoring outside world.

So secretive is the CIA operation that Grogan was sometimes dubbed "the official non-spokesman" by frustrated but admiring newspapermen. At that, he was better off than most of the (number-is-a-secret) employees, who are not even permitted to tell bosom pals that they work for CIA.

Suffice it to say that if Stan Grogan didn't know what was going on in the world, it just wasn't happening. Period.

When politicians were heaping abuse on CIA for its role in the Bay of Pigs, fiasco, Grogan kept his urbanity and private counsel. In fact, it was his advice which Allen Dulles followed in deciding to offer no defense of CIA's conduct.

Only twice during the past decade has the agency deviated from its policy of public silence. The first occurred after Senator Joseph R. McCarthy charged that CIA had been infiltrated by Communists, but declined to furnish it the list of alleged suspects. Grogan issued a statement calling the Senator a liar.

More recently, after French official sources insinuated that the CIA had

masterminded the overthrow of Algerian generals, Grogan's was the agency voice which called the assertion false.

Grogan's colorful career began with World War I, when he served four years as an intelligence officer with the 49th Infantry Regiment here and in Europe.

During the keep-cool-with-Coolidge era he coached the national CMTG champion rifle team, taught military science, served as an assistant to G-2 Army Intelligence headquarters, and did a six-year stint in New York as chief of the Army Information Service.

While on the War Department's General Staff in 1940, super sleuth Grogan went on a secret mission in civilian clothes to Dutch Surinam.

He returned four days before Pearl Harbor, and soon was setting up press background briefings for Secretary Henry L. Stimson, Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, and Assistant War Secretary John McCloy.

Itchy to see action himself, Grogan arranged with his former classmate, Gen. Alfred Gruenther, to go to the battlefield, and for the next several years made his way north with Gen. Mark Clark from the Boot of Italy to the heart of Austria, handling press relations.

Those are the years he can still talk about. Soon after Gen. Bedell Smith took command of CIA, Grogan was tapped as his "Man Friday," and he's been practically mute ever since.

Now that he's out of government, about the only thing he can still say about CIA is: "It's one of the finest organizations I've ever had anything to do with. The personnel is terrifically good, and they have more Ph. D. degrees than you can shake a stick at. The morale is excellent, despite all that secrecy stuff. It's a great outfit."

Stan, believe it or not, does not intend to write a book.



MONTGOMERY